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Introduction to Book IV (Psalms 90-106)

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Introduction to Book IV (Psalms 90-106)

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Overview of the Numerical Features of the Psalms in Book IV

The **17** psalms in Book IV divide into the pattern **17 = 11 + 6**, as in Book III:

Psalms 90-100 (**11** mainly divine kingship psalms – 1 Mosaic, **10** nameless)

Psalms 101-106 (**6** psalms – **2** Davidic and **4** nameless)

17 psalms: **2** Davidic, **14** nameless and 1 Mosaic.

While Book III contains *one* Davidic psalm representing this important category of psalms, Book IV prides itself on having *two* Davidic psalms (101 and 103).

Another significant formal feature of the **17** psalms of Book IV is that they lack *selahs*. The same holds true for Book V, except for the three *selahs* in Psalm 140.

Moreover, the series of **23** *hallelu-yahs* in the Psalter start in Book IV, in Psalm 104.

The psalms in Book IV and groupings of psalms lack coherence based on 'authorship', but this does not mean that Book IV contains a conglomerate of individual psalms. Quite the contrary, I shall adduce evidence to show that Book IV is a close-knit compositional unity, divided into two distinct sections, like Book III, in the pattern **17 = 11 + 6**.

To this end, let me first present the numerical aspects of the book in the following Tables:

Table XIII: supposed authorship, the number of Masoretic verses, the occurrences of the name YHWH, the word '*elohim*' and other designations;

Table XIV: the number of poetic verselines, the total number of words, and the words before and after atnach (*excluding* the headings; no *selahs* present);

Table XV: the number of words, and words before and after atnach (*including* headings);

Table XVI: Word-count of the headings and their positioning in the first verse.

Table XIII: Masoretic verses and divine name count

Psalm	'Author'	Masoretic verses	YHWH	Elohim	Other designations
90	Moses	17	1	-	Adonay 2 El 1
91	No name	16	2	-	Elyon 1
92	No name	16	7	-	Elyon 1 Marom 1
93	No name	5	5	-	-
94	No name	23	9	-	YH 2 El 2
95	No name	11	3	-	El 1
96	No name	13	11	-	-
97	No name	12	6	-	Adon 1
98	No name	9	6	-	-
99	No name	9	7	-	El 1
100	No name	5	4	-	-
90-100	11 Psalms	136 (8x17)	61	-	13 altogether
101	David	8	2	-	-
102	No name	29	7*	-	YH 1
103	David	22	11	-	-
104	No name	35	9	-	-
105	No name	45	5	-	-
106:1-48	No name	48	9	-	El 2
101-106:48	6 psalms	187 (11x17)	43*	-	YH 1 El 2
90-106:48	17 Psalms	323 (19x17)	104*	-	YH 3, El 7, Elyon 2, Adon 1, Adonaj 2, Marom 1

* Excluding YHWH in the heading of 102, but including (as always) the one in the doxology (106:48).

Observations

1. The fact that the sub-group of *eleven* psalms (90-100) and the sub-group of *six* (101-106) are both made up of multiples of the divine name number **17** in terms of Masoretic verses indicates deliberate design: **136 + 187 = 323 (19 x 17)**.
2. The total number of occurrences of the name YHWH (including the doxology) amount to **104 (4 x 26)**. Elohim is absent, but El occurs **7** times.

Table XIV: Verseline- and word-count *excluding* the headings

Psalm	'Author'	Verselines	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach
90	Moses	18	136 (8x17)	85 (5x17)	51 (3x17)
91	No name	16	112	66	46
90-91	Total	34 (2x17)	248	151	97
92	No name	15	112	70	42
91-92	Total	31	224	136 (8x17)	88
90-92	Total	49	360	221 (13x17)	139
93	No name	5	45	29	16
94	No name	23	169	90	79
95	No name	11	89	49	40
94-95	Total	34 (2x17)	258	139	119 (7x17)
96	No name	14	112	65	47
90-96	Total	102 (6x17)	775	454	321
97	No name	12	95	53	42
96-97	Total	26	207	118	89
98	No name	12	74	44	30
99	No name	11	83	52	31
100	No name	5	41	27	14
90-100	Total	142	1068	630	438
101	David	14	81	52 (2x26)	29
102	No name	29	204 (12x17)	111	93
103	David	22	166	88	78 (3x26)
104	No name	35	269	149	120
105	No name	45	292	158	134
106:1-48	No name	51 (3x17)	327	192	135
101-106:48	6 Psalms	196	1339	750	589
90-106:48	17 psalms	338 (13 x 26)	2407	1380	1027

Observation

The total number of verselines (*including* the doxology) in Book IV, **338** (13 x **26**), is perfectly in line with the significant number of verselines in Books I, 2 and 3.

Table XV: Word-count including the headings; no *selahs* present

Psalm	'Author'	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach
90	Moses	140	89	51 (3x17)
91	No name	112	66	46
92	No name	112	70	42
90-92	Total	364 (14x26)	225	139
93	No name	45	29	16
94	No name	169	90	79
93-94	Total	214	119 (7x17)	95
95	No name	89	49	40
96	No name	112	65	47
97	No name	95	53	42
93-97	Total	510 (30x17)	286	224
98	No name	74	44	30
99	No name	83	52 (2x26)	31
96-99	Total	364 (14x26)	214	150
100	No name	41	27	14
90-100	Total	1072	634	438
101	David	83	54	29
102	No name	212	115	97
103	David	167	89	78 (3x26)
104	No name	269/271*	149/151*	120
105	No name	292/294*	158/160*	134
106	No name	327/330*	192/195*	135
101-106	6 Psalms	1350/1357*	757/764*	593
90-106	17 Psalms	2422/2429*	1391/1398*	1031

* Including *hallelu-yah* / *halleluyah*.

Observation

- The word-count, *including* the headings, shows some significant results:

Psalm 90	51 (3 x 17) words after atnach (as in Table XIV)
Pss. 90-92	364 (14 x 26) words in total
Pss. 93-94	119 (7 x 17) words before atnach (as in Table XIV)
Pss. 93-97	510 (30 x 17) words in total (as in Table XIV)
Pss. 96-99	364 (14 x 26) words in total (as in Table XIV)
Psalm 99	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach (as in Table XIV)
Pss. 101-104	731 (43 x 17) words in total.

In comparison with the results in Table XIV, *excluding* headings, there are several losses of divine name numbers and only one new one: the **364** (14 x **26**) words of Psalms 90-92. This justifies the conclusion that the headings were not taken into consideration in the compositional process of the psalms proper. See the Introduction to [Book I](#), Table IV, Observation 2.

However, when it comes to the total numbers of words, *including* the headings, 2429 (3rd column), this number appears to be significant. Together with the total number of words in Book III, 2773, the two books have altogether **5202** words, which is a multiple of **17** (**306 x 17 = 153 x 17 x 2 = 9 x 17 x 17 x 2 = 5202**). This is additional evidence for the 'togetherness' of Books III and IV, which are both made up of **17** psalms. I owe this observation to Dr. Jim McMillan. See the Introduction to [Book III](#), Table XI and the Observation there, as well as the paragraph "Book IV as a Whole" below.

Table XVI: The word-count of the headings and their positioning

Psalm	'Author'	No heading	In first verse	Separate vs.	'Context'
90	Moses		4 words	-	-
91	No name	x	-	-	-
92	No name	-	-	4 words	-
93	No name	x	-	-	-
94	No name	x	-	-	-
95	No name	x	-	-	-
96	No name	x	-	-	-
97	No name	x	-	-	-
98	No name	-	1 word	-	-
99	No name	x	-	-	-
100	No name	x	2 words	-	
90-100	11 psalms	8 psalms	7 words	4 words	
101	David	-	2 words	-	-
102	No name	-	-	8 words	-
103	David	-	1 word	-	-
104	No name	x	-	-	-
105	No name	x	-	-	-
106	No name	-	1	-	-
90-106	17 Psalms	10 psalms	5 psalms 11 words	in 2 psalms 12 words	no 'context'

Observation

- The heading in Psalm 106 is the word *halleluyah*, here written as *one* word. Psalms 92 and 102 are the only psalms in Book IV having the heading in separate verses. Their headings contain the purpose for which the psalms were composed.

Significant Numerical Features of Book IV

The book as a whole

Psalms 90-106	323 (19 x 17) Masoretic verses
Psalms 90-106	338 (13 x 26) verselines
Psalms 90-106	104 (4 x 26) occurrences of the name YHWH

The Sub-group of *Eleven* Psalms: Psalms 90-100

Psalms 90-100	136 (8 x 17) Masoretic verses
Psalms 90-91	34 (2 x 17) verselines
Psalms 90	136 (8x 17) words, 85 (5x 17) before and 51 (3x 17) after atnach
Psalms 91-92	136 (8 x 17) words before atnach
Psalms 90-92	221 (13 x 17) words before atnach
Psalms 93-94	119 (7 x 17) words before atnach
Psalms 94-95	34 (2 x 17) verselines and 119 (7 x 17) words after atnach
Psalms 93-96	182 (7 x 26) words after atnach
Psalms 90-96	102 (6 x 17) verselines
Psalms 96-97	26 verselines
Psalms 96-98	119 (7 x 17) words after atnach
Psalms 99	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach
Psalms 96-99	364 (14 x 26) words in total

The Sub-group of *Six* Psalms: Psalms 101-106

Psalms 101-106	187 (11 x 17) Masoretic verses
Psalms 101	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach
Psalms 102	204 (12 x 17) words in total
Psalms 103	78 (3 x 26) words after atnach
Psalms 106	51 (3 x 17) verselines

Note: some of the above numbers may be due to coincidence, but certainly not all of them.

The Compositional Structure of Book IV

90 91 92 93 94 **95** 96 97 98 99 **100** (11)

101 102 103 104 105 106 (6) **11 + 6 = 17**

Book IV: Third Expansion of the Davidic Psalter: Psalms 90-106

For a full discussion, see the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).

Book IV: Select Bibliography – in cooperation with Pieter van der Lugt

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